HIS GRACE

The Lord Archbishop of *Canterbury's*

SERMON

BEFORE THE

QUEEN,

March 20th, 169½.

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The Lord Arch-Bishop of Canterbury's

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Preach'd before the

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AT

WHITE-HALL,

March the XXth, 169¹/₂.

By JOHN *Lord Archbiſhop of* Canterbury.

Publiſhed by Her Majeſty's ſpecial Command.

LONDON:

Printed for *Brabazon Aylmer*, at the *Three Pidgeons* over-againſt the *Royal Exchange* in *Cornhill*; and *William Rogers* at the *Sun* over-againſt St. *Dunſtan's* Church in *Fleetſtreet*. MDCXCII.

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Psalm Lxxiii. 25.

Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee.

THE design of this *Psalm* is to vindicate the goodness and justice of the Divine Providence, notwithstanding the prosperous estate of the wicked and the afflicted condition of good men many times in this World. And in the first place, the *Psalmist*, whoever he was, whether *David* or *Asaph*, lays down this for a most certain Truth, that God is good to good men: *Of a truth God is good to* Israel, *to such as are of a clean heart.* v. 1.

And yet for all this he tells us, that at some times he was under no small temptation to question the truth of this *Principle*, when he beheld the promiscuous dispensation of things here below; that the wicked are often prosperous, and good men exposed to great calamities in this life; as if God either neglected human affairs, or had a greater kindness for the workers of iniquity than for pious and good men: *As for me, my foot had well nigh slipp'd, for I was envious at the foolish, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked.* v. 2.

This, he says, was a very great stumbling-block

to good men, and tempted them to doubt of the
V. 10. Providence of God: *Therefore his People return hither, and waters of a full cup are wrung out to them; and they ſay, doth God know, and is there knowledge in the moſt High?* This Sentence is ſomewhat obſcurely rendred in our *Tranſlation*, ſo as to make the ſenſe of it difficult, which is plainly this, *Therefore his people return hither*, that is, therefore good men come to this, in the greatneſs of their affliction, and in the bitterneſs of their ſoul, to queſtion God's knowledg and care of human affairs.

V. 12. *Behold*, ſay they, *theſe are the ungodly, and yet they are the proſperous in the world, they increaſe in riches*: To what purpoſe then is it for any man to be Religious and vertuous? *Verily, I have cleanſed my heart in vain,*
V. 13. *and waſhed my hands in innocency*: In vain have I endeavoured after purity of heart and innocency of life, ſince ſo little good comes of it; nay, ſo far from that, that I have been in continual trouble and affliction: *All the day long have I been plagued, and chaſt-*
V. 14. *ned every morning*.

Such thoughts as theſe often came into his mind, and gave him great trouble and diſquiet: But he preſently corrects himſelf: *If I ſay I will ſpeak thus,*
V. 15. *I ſhould offend againſt the generation of thy Children*, that is, I ſhould go againſt the ſenſe of all pious and good men, who have always believed the Providence

dence of God notwithſtanding this Objection: Which at laſt he tells us he had raiſed on purpoſe to try if he could find the ſolution of it: *I thought to know this, which was grievous in mine eyes*: And then he reſolves all into the unſearchable wiſdom of the Divine Providence, which if we fully underſtood from firſt to laſt, we ſhould ſee good reaſon to be ſatisfied with the equity of it: *When I go into the Sanctuary of God, then ſhall I underſtand the end of theſe men? How thou didſt ſet them in ſlippery places*, &c. This ſatisfied him, that whenever the ſecret deſign of God's Providence ſhould be unfolded whether in this World or the other, how ſtrange and croſs ſoever things might ſeem to be at preſent, yet in the iſſue and concluſion it would appear, that neither are bad men ſo happy, nor good men ſo miſerable, as at preſent they may ſeem to be. V. 16. V. 17, 18.

So that upon a full debate of this matter the *Pſalmiſt* concludes, that theſe Objections againſt Providence do ſpring from our ignorance, and ſhort and imperfect view of things; whereas if we ſaw the whole deſign from beginning to end, it would appear to be very reaſonable and regular. *Thus my heart was grieved; ſo fooliſh was I and ignorant, and as a beaſt before thee.* And in regard to himſelf he tells us, that he ſaw great reaſon to acknowledge God's tender care over him in particular, and that he could V. 21.

find no ſecurity or comfort for himſelf, but in God alone: *Neverthleſs I am continually with thee; thou haſt holden me by thy right hand: Thou ſhalt guide me with thy counſel, and afterwards receive me to glory;* as if he had ſaid, I am ſenſible of thy conſtant preſence with me, and care of me; and do entirely depend upon thy guidance and direction, not doubting but that my preſent troubles and afflictions will have a happy and glorious iſſue. V. 23.

And at laſt he breaks out into a kind of exultation and triumph for the mighty conſolation which he found in the firm belief of the *Being* and *Providence* of God, as the great ſtay and ſupport of his ſoul in the worſt condition that could befall him; in the words of the *Text*, *Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I deſire beſides thee.* If a man were to chuſe a happineſs for himſelf, and were to ranſack Heaven and Earth for it, after all his ſearch and enquiry he would at laſt fix upon God as the chief happineſs of man, and the true and only reſt and center of our ſouls. This then is the plain meaning of the *Text*, *That nothing in the world but God can make man happy: Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I deſire beſides thee.*

That man of himſelf is not ſufficient for his own happineſs is evident upon many accounts: Becauſe he is liable to ſo many evils and calamities, which he

He can neither prevent, nor remedy: He is full of wants which he cannot ſupply; compaſſed about with infirmities which he can only complain of, but is not able to redreſs: He is obnoxious to dangers which he muſt always fear, becauſe he can never ſufficiently provide againſt them.

Conſider man by himſelf, and from under the conduct and protection of a ſuperior and more powerful Being, and he is in a moſt diſconſolate and forlorn condition: Secure of nothing that he enjoys, and liable to be diſappointed of every thing that he hopes for: He is apt to grieve for what he cannot help, and perhaps the juſteſt cauſe of his grief is that he cannot help it; for if he could, inſtead of grieving for it he would help it: He cannot refrain from deſiring a great many things which he would fain have, but is never likely to obtain, becauſe they are out of his power; and it troubles him both that they are ſo, and that he cannot help his being troubled at it. *Thus man walketh in a vain ſhew, and diſquieteth himſelf in vain*; courting happineſs in a thouſand ſhapes, and the faſter he follows it the ſwifter it flyes from him. Almoſt every thing promiſeth happineſs to us at a diſtance, ſuch a ſtep of Honour, ſuch a pitch of Eſtate, ſuch a Fortune or Match for a Child: But when we come nearer to it, either we fall ſhort of it, or it falls ſhort of our expectation; and it is hard

to

to ſay which of theſe is the greateſt diſappointment. Our hopes are uſually bigger than enjoyment can ſatisfie, and an evil long fear'd, beſides that it may never come, is many times more painful and troubleſome than the evil it ſelf when it comes.

In a word, man is born to trouble as the ſparks fly upwards. He comes into the world naked and unarm'd, and from himſelf more deſtitute of the natural means of his ſecurity and ſupport than any other Creature whatſoever, as it were on purpoſe to ſhew that he is more peculiarly the care of a Superior Providence: And as man, of all the Creatures of this lower world, is only made to own and acknowledg a Deity; ſo God in great wiſdom hath ſo order'd things, that none of the other Creatures ſhould have ſo much need of Him, and ſo much reaſon to acknowledg their neceſſary dependance upon him. So that the words of *David* are the very ſenſe and voice of Nature, declaring to us that Mankind is born into the World upon terms of greater dependance upon the Providence of God than other Creatures: *Thou art he,* ſays *David* there to God, *that tookeſt me out of the womb,* Pſal. 22. 9, 10, 11. *thou madeſt me to hope,* or thou didſt keep me in ſafety, *when I was upon my mother's breaſts: I was caſt upon thee from the womb, thou art my God from my mother's belly: Be not far from me, for trouble is near:* Trouble is always near to us, and therefore it is happy for us that God is never far

far from any of us : *For in Him we live, and move, and have our being.*

And when we are grown up, we are liable to a great many miſchiefs and dangers, every moment of our lives; and, without the Providence of God, continually inſecure, not only of the good things of this life, but even of life it ſelf: So that when we come to be men, we cannot but wonder how ever we arriv'd at that ſtate, and how we have continued in it ſo long, conſidering the infinite difficulties and dangers which have continually attended us : That in running the *gantlope* of a long life, when ſo many hands have been lifted up againſt us, and ſo many ſtrokes levell'd at us, we have eſcaped ſo free, and with ſo few marks and ſcars upon us : That when we are beſieged with ſo many dangers, and ſo many arrows of death are perpetually flying about us, to which we do ſo many ways lie open, we ſhould yet hold out *twenty, forty, ſixty* years, and ſome of us perhaps longer, and do ſtill ſtand at the mark untouch'd, at leaſt not dangerouſly wounded by any of them : And conſidering likewiſe this fearful and wonderful frame of a human Body, this infinitely complicated Engine; in which, to the due performance of the ſeveral functions and offices of life, ſo many ſtrings and ſprings, ſo many receptacles and channels are neceſſary, and all in their right frame and order; and in which, beſides the infinite imper-

imperceptible and ſecret ways of mortality, there are ſo many ſluces and flood-gates to let Death in and Life out, that it is next to a miracle, tho we take but little notice of it, that every one of us did not dye every day ſince we were born: I ſay, conſidering the nice and curious frame of our Bodies, and the innumerable contingencies and hazards of human Life, which is ſet in ſo ſlippery a place, that we ſtill continue in the land of the living we cannot aſcribe to any thing but the watchful Providence of Almighty God, *who holds our ſoul in life, and ſuffers not our foot to be moved.*

To the ſame merciful Providence of God we owe, that whilſt we continue in life we have any comfortable poſſeſſion and enjoyment of our ſelves and of that which makes us men, I mean our Reaſon and Underſtanding: That our Imagination is not let looſe upon us, to haunt and torment us with melancholick freaks and fears: That we are not deliver'd up to the horrors of a gloomy and guilty mind: That every day we do not fall into frenzy and diſtraction, which next to wickedneſs and vice is the ſoreſt calamity, and ſaddeſt diſguiſe of human nature: I ſay, next to wickedneſs and vice, which is a wilful frenzy, a madneſs not from misfortune but from choice; whereas the *other* proceeds from natural and neceſſary cauſes, ſuch as are in a great meaſure out of our power; ſo that we are perpetually liable to it, from any ſecret and

and ſudden diſorder of the Brain, from the violence of a Diſeaſe, or the vehement tranſport of any Paſſion.

Now if things were under no government, what could hinder ſo many probable evils from breaking in upon us, and from treading upon the heels of one another? like the Calamities of *Job*, when *the hedge which God had ſet about him and all that he had was broken down and removed.*

So that if there were no God to take care of us, we could be ſecure of no ſort, no degree of happineſs in this World; no not for one moment: And there would be no other World for us to be happy in, and to make amends to us for all the fears and dangers, all the troubles and calamities of this preſent life: For God and another World ſtand and fall together: Without *Him* there can be no Life after this; and if our hopes of happineſs were only in this Life, Man of all other Beings in this lower World would certainly be the moſt miſerable.

I cannot ſay that all the Evils which I have mentioned would happen to all, if the Providence of God did not rule the World; but that every man would be in danger of them all, and have nothing to ſupport and comfort him againſt the fear of that danger. For the nature of man, conſider'd by it ſelf, is plainly inſufficient for its own happineſs; ſo that we muſt neceſſarily look abroad, and ſeek for it

somewhere else: And who can shew us that good that is equal to all the wants and necessities, all the capacities and desires, all the fears and hopes of human nature? Whatsoever can answer all these must have these following Properties,

First, It must be an all-sufficient good.
Secondly, It must be perfect goodness.
Thirdly, It must be firm and unchangeable in it self.
Fourthly, It must be such a good as none can deprive us of, and take away from us.
Fifthly, It must be eternal.
Sixthly, It must be able to support and comfort us in every condition, and under all the accidents and adversities of human Life.
Lastly, It must be such a good as can give perfect rest and tranquillity to our minds.

Nothing that is short of all this can make us happy: And no Creature, no not the whole Creation, can pretend to be all this to us. All these Properties meet only in God, who is the perfect and supream Good; as I shall endeavour, in the following Discourse, more particularly to shew; and consequently, *That God is the only happiness of Man.*

I. *First*, God is an all-sufficient Good. And this does import two things; Wisdom to contrive our happi-

ness,

neſs, and Power to effect it; for neither of theſe without the other is ſufficient, and both theſe in the higheſt and moſt eminent degree are in God.

He is infinitely *Wiſe* to deſign and contrive our happineſs; becauſe he knows what Happineſs is, and how to frame us ſo as to be capable of the happineſs he deſigns for us; and how to order and diſpoſe all other things ſo, as that they ſhall be no hindrance and impediment to it.

He perfectly underſtands all the poſſibilities of things, and how to fit means to any end. He knows all our wants, and how to ſupply them; all our hopes and deſires, and how to ſatisfy them: He foreſees all the dangers and evils which threaten us, and knows how to prevent or divert them, if he think fit; or if he permit them to come, how to ſupport us under them, or to deliver us out of them, or to turn them to our greater benefit and advantage in the laſt iſſue and reſult of things.

His Wiſdom cannot be ſurpriſed by any accident which he did not foreſee, and which he is not ſufficiently provided againſt. The wiſdom of men is but ſhort and imperfect, and liable to infinite errours and miſtakes: In many caſes men know not what is ſafeſt and beſt for them, nor whether *this* or *that* will conduce moſt to their happineſs: Nay it often happens that thoſe very means which the wiſeſt men

chuſe for their ſecurity do prove the occaſions of their ruine, and they are thrown down by thoſe very ways whereby they thought to raiſe and to eſtabliſh themſelves.

Eſpecially if God breath upon the Counſels of men, how are their deſigns blaſted? How are they infatuated and foil'd in their deepeſt contrivances, and *ſnared in the work of their own hands?* When *it is of the Lord*, the wiſdom of the greateſt *Politicians* is turned into fooliſhneſs: For *there is no wiſdom, nor underſtanding, nor counſel againſt the Lord.*

But the Divine wiſdom, being founded upon infinite knowledge, is thereby ſecur'd againſt all poſſibility of errour and miſtake. God perfectly knows the natures and the powers of all his Creatures, and therefore can never be miſtaken in the uſe and application of them to any of his purpoſes: So that none of his deſigns of love and mercy to the Sons of men can miſcarry for want of good contrivance, or wiſe conduct.

And as he is perfectly *wiſe* to contrive our happineſs, ſo is he infinitely *powerful* to effect it, and to remove out of the way all the obſtacles and impediments of it. We may underſtand many times what would conduce to our happineſs, but may not be able to compaſs it; but nothing is out of the reach of Omnipotency: Many things are difficult to us, but

but nothing is too hard for God: Many things are impoſſible with us, but *with God all things are poſſible.* For He is the fountain and original of all power, from whom it is deriv'd and upon whom it depends, and to whom it is perfectly ſubject and ſubordinate: He can do all things at once, and in an inſtant, and with the greateſt eaſe; and no created power can put any difficulty in his way, much leſs make any effectual reſiſtance; becauſe Omnipotency can check, and countermand, and bear down before it all other Powers.

So that if God be on our ſide, who can be againſt us? We may ſafely *commit our Souls into his hands, for he is able to keep that which is committed to him.* He can give us all good things, and deliver us from all evil, for *his is the Kingdom and the glorious Power.* Though all Creatures ſhould fail us, we may rely upon God, and live upon his All-ſufficiency for our ſupply; and may ſay with the *Prophet, Though the Figtree ſhould not bloſſom, neither Fruit be in the Vine; though the labour of the Olive ſhould fail, and the Fields ſhould yield no meat; though the Flock ſhould be cut off from the Fold, and there ſhould be no Herd in the Stalls; yet would I rejoice in the Lord, and joy in the God of my Salvation.*

Secondly, As God is an All-ſufficient Good, ſo He is perfect Goodneſs. He is willing to communicate happineſs to us, and to employ his Power and Wiſ- II.

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dom for our good. He made us that he might make us happy, and nothing can hinder us from being ſo but our ſelves. Such is his goodneſs, that *he would have all men to be ſaved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth*: And when we have provoked him by our ſins, *he is long ſuffering to us ward, not willing that any ſhould periſh, but that all ſhould come to repentance*: For *he delighteth not in the death of a ſinner, but rather that he ſhould turn from his wickedneſs and live.* So that if any of us be miſerable, it is our own choice; if we periſh, our deſtruction is of our ſelves: For as the *Wiſeman*, in one of the *Apocryphal* Books, ſays excellently, *God made not death, neither hath he pleaſure in the deſtruction of the living: But men ſeek death in the errour of their life, and pull deſtruction upon themſelves, with the works of their own hands.*

So great is the goodneſs of God to mankind, that he hath omitted nothing that is neceſſary to our happineſs. He deſign'd it for us at firſt, and to that end he hath endued us with powers and faculties whereby we are capable of knowing, and loving, and obeying, and enjoying *Him* the chief Good. And when we had forfeited all this by the wilful tranſgreſſion and diſobedience of the firſt Parents of mankind, and were miſerably bruiſed and maimed by their fall, God of his infinite mercy was pleas'd to reſtore us to a new capacity of happineſs, by ſend-

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ing his only Son to ſuffer in our nature, and in our ſtead; and thereby to become *a Propitiation for the ſins of the whole World*, and *the Author of eternal Salvation to them that believe and obey him*: And he hath likewiſe promiſed to give us his Holy Spirit, to enable us to that Faith and Obedience which the Goſpel requires of us, as the neceſſary conditions of our eternal Salvation.

Thirdly, God is alſo a firm and unchangeable Good. Notwithſtanding his infinite Wiſdom, and Power, and Goodneſs, we might be miſerable if God were mutable. For that cannot be a happineſs which depends upon uncertainties, and perhaps one of the greateſt aggravations of miſery is to fall from happineſs, to have been once happy and afterwards to ceaſe to be ſo: And that would unavoidably happen to us, if the cauſe of our happineſs could change, and the foundation of it be removed. If God could be otherwiſe than powerful, and wiſe, and good, all our hopes of happineſs would be ſhaken, and would fall to the ground. But the Divine nature is not ſubject to any change: As he is *the Father of lights*, and *the Author of every good and perfect gift*, ſo *with him is no variableneſs, neither ſhadow of turning*. All the things of this World are mutable, and for that reaſon, had they no other imperfection belonging to them, cannot make us happy. III.

Fourthly, God is ſuch a good as none can deprive IV.

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us of and take away from us. If the things of this World were unchangeable in their nature, and not liable to any decay, yet they cannot make us happy; because we may be cheated of them by fraud, or robb'd of them by violence: But God cannot be taken from us. Nothing but our Sins can part God and us: *Who shall separate us,* saith the *Apostle, from the love of God? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?* We may be stripp'd of all our worldly comforts and enjoyments, by the violence of men; but none of all these can separate us from God: *I am perswaded,* as the *Apostle* goes on *with great triumph, that neither death nor life; nor Angels, nor Principalities, nor Powers; nor heighth, nor depth, nor things present, nor things to come, nor any other Creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ* Jesus, *our Lord. Nor any other Creature*: Here is a sufficient induction of particulars, and nothing left out of this Catalogue but one, and *that* is *Sin*, which is none of God's *Creatures*, but our own: *This* indeed deliberately consented to, and wilfully continued in, will finally part God and us, and for ever hinder us from being happy.

Rom. 8. 35.

v. 38, 39.

But if we be careful to avoid this, which only can separate between God and us, nothing can deprive us of Him: The aids and influences of his Grace none can intercept and hinder; the

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joyes and comforts of his Holy Spirit none can take from us: All other things may leave us and forsake us: We may be debarr'd of our best friends, and banish'd from all our acquaintance; but men can send us no whither from the presence of God: Our Communication with Heaven cannot be prevented or interrupted: Our Prayers and our Souls will always find the way thither from the uttermost parts of the Earth.

Fifthly, God is an Eternal God: And nothing but what is so can make us happy. Man having an immortal Spirit, and being design'd for an endless duration, must have a happiness proportionable: For which reason nothing in this World can make us happy, because we shall abide and remain after it: When a very few years are past and gone, and much sooner for any thing we know, all the things of this World will leave us, or else we shall be taken away from them, *But God is from everlasting to everlasting: He is the same, and his years faile not*: Therefore well might *David* fix his happiness upon God alone, and say, *Whom have I in Heaven but thee? and there is none upon Earth that I desire besides thee: When my heart faileth, and my strength faileth, God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever.* V.

VI. *Sixthly*, God is able to ſupport and comfort us, in every condition, and under all the accidents and adverſities of human Life. Outward afflictions may hurt our Body, but they cannot reach our Soule; and ſo long as *that* remains unwounded *the ſpirit of a man can bear his infirmities.* God is intimate to our Soules, and hath ſecret wayes whereby to convey the joyes and comforts of his Holy Spirit into our hearts, under the bittereſt afflictions and ſharpeſt ſufferings: He can enable us by his Grace *to poſſeſs our ſoules in patience*, when all other things are taken from us: When there is nothing but trouble about us, He can *give us peace and joy in believing*: When we are *perſecuted, afflicted*, and *tormented*, He can give us that raviſhing ſight of the Glories of another World, that ſtedfaſt aſſurance of a future Bleſſedneſs, as ſhall quite extinguiſh all ſenſe of preſent ſufferings: How did many of the primitive *Chriſtian Martyrs*, in the midſt of their torments, and under the very pangs of death *rejoyce in the hope of the glory of God*?

There are none of us but may happen to fall into thoſe circumſtances of danger, and of bodily paines and ſufferings, as to have no hopes of relief and comfort but from God; none in all the World to truſt to but *Him* only: And in the great-

greateſt Evils that can befall us in this life, He is a ſure refuge and ſanctuary; and to repeat the words of the *Pſalmiſt* after the Text, *When our heart failes, and our ſtrength failes, God is the ſtrength of our hearts, and our portion for ever.*

Now what would any of us do in ſuch a Caſe, if it were not for God? Human nature is liable to deſperate ſtraits and exigencies: And he is not happy who is not provided againſt the worſt that may happen. It is ſad to be reduced to ſuch a condition, as to be deſtitute of all comfort and hope: And yet men may be brought to that extremity, that if it were not for God they would not know which way to turn themſelves, or how to entertain their thoughts with any comfortable conſiderations under their preſent anguiſh.

All men naturally reſort to God in extremity, and cry out to him for help: Even the moſt profane and Atheiſtical, when they are deſtitute of all other comfort, will run to God, and take hold of him, and cling about him. But *God hath no pleaſure in fooles*, in thoſe who neglect and deſpiſe him in their proſperity, though they owe that alſo entirely to him; but when the evil day comes, then they lay hold of him as their only refuge: When all things go well with them,

God is not in all their thoughts; but in their affliction they will seek him early: Then they will cry Lord, Lord, but he will say to them in that day, depart from me ye workers of iniquity, for I know you not.

Here will be the great unhappiness of such persons, that God will then appear terrible to them, so as they shall not be able, when they look up to him, to abide his frowns: And at the same time that they are forc'd to acknowledge him, and to supplicate to him for mercy and forgiveness, they shall be ready to despair of it: Then, those terrible threatnings of Gods Word will come to their minds, *Because I called, and ye refused; I stretched out my hand, and no man regarded: But ye set at nought all my counsel, and would have none of my reproof; I also will laugh at your calamity, and mock when your fear cometh; when your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon you: Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me: For that they hated knowledge, and did not chuse the fear of the Lord: They would none of my counsel, they despised all my reproofs: Therefore shall they eat the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices: The ease of the simple shall slay them, and the prosperity of fools*

Prov. 1. 24. 25. &c.

shall

ſhall deſtroy them. To which I will add that terrible Paſſage in the *Prophet*, concerning the perverſe and obſtinate *Jews*, *They are a People of no underſtanding, therefore he that made them will not have mercy on them, and he that formed them will ſhew them no favour.* Iſa. 27. 11. And men are miſerable Creatures indeed, when God their *Maker* doth abandon them, and hath ſo far hardened his heart againſt them, that he can have no pity and compaſſion for them.

VII. *Seventhly* and laſtly, which is conſequent upon all the reſt, God is ſuch a Good as can give perfect reſt and tranquillity to our minds. And that which cannot do this, though it had all the Properties before mentioned, cannot make us happy. For he is not happy who does not think himſelf ſo, whatever cauſe he may have to think ſo. Now what in reaſon can give us diſquiet, if we do firmly believe that there is a God, and that his Providence rules and governs all things for the beſt; and that God is all that to good Men which hath now been ſaid of Him? Why ſhould not our minds be in perfect repoſe, when we are ſecure of the chief Good, and have found out that which can make us happy, and is willing to make us ſo, if we be not wanting to our ſelves, and by our wilful obſtinacy and rebellion againſt him.

him do not oppoſe and fruſtrate this deſign?

If a conſiderate Man were permitted to his own choice, to wiſh the greateſt good to himſelf that he could poſſibly deviſe; after he had ſearched Heaven and Earth, the reſult of all his wiſhes would be that there were juſt ſuch a Being as we muſt neceſſarily conceive God to be: Nor would he chuſe any other Friend or Benefactour; any other Protector for himſelf or Governour for the whole World, than infinite Power conducted and managed by infinite Wiſdom and Goodneſs; which is the true Notion of a God: After all his enquiry he would come to the *Pſalmiſt*'s concluſion here in the Text, *Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I deſire beſides thee.*

Vain Man is apt to ſeek for happineſs elſewhere, but this proceeds from want of due conſideration: For when all things are well weigh'd, and all accounts rightly caſt up and adjuſted, we ſhall at laſt ſettle in *David*'s reſolution of that great *Queſtion, What is the chief Good of man?* Pſ. 4. 6, 7, 8. *There be many,* ſays he, *that ſay, Who will ſhew us any good?* that is, men are generally inquiſitive after happineſs, but greatly divided in their Opinions about it: moſt men place it in the preſent enjoyments of this World, but *David* for his part pitches upon God, in whom he was fully con-

convinc'd that the happineſs of man does conſiſt: *There be many that ſay, who will ſhew us any good? Lord lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us: Thou haſt put gladneſs in my heart, more than in the time that their Corn and Wine increaſed.* The great joy of the men of this World is in a plentiful Harveſt, and the abundance of the good things of this life: But *David* had found that which gave more joy and gladneſs to his heart, the favour of God and the *light of his countenance*: This gave perfect reſt and tranquillity to his mind, ſo that he needed not to enquire any further: For ſo it follows in the next words, *I will both lay me down in peace, and reſt, for thou, Lord, onely makeſt me to dwell in ſafety*: The *Hebrew* word ſignifies *confidence* or *ſecurity*: Here, and no where elſe, his mind found reſt, and was in perfect eaſe and ſecurity.

I ſhall now only make two or three *Inferences* from this Diſcourſe, and ſo conclude.

First, This plainly ſhews us the great unreaſonableneſs and folly of *Atheiſm*, which would baniſh the belief of God and his Providence out of the World: Which as it is moſt impious in reſpect of God, ſo is it moſt malicious to Men; becauſe it ſtrikes at the very foundation of our happineſs, and perfectly undermines it. For if there

there were no God, man would evidently be the moſt unhappy of all other Beings here below; becauſe his unhappineſs would be laid in the very frame of his nature, in that which diſtinguiſhes him from all other Beings below him, I mean in his Reaſon and Underſtanding: And he would be ſo much more miſerable than the Beaſts, by how much he hath a farther reach, and a larger proſpect of future evils; a quicker apprehenſion, and a deeper and more laſting reſentment of them.

So that if any man could ſee reaſon to ſtagger his belief of a God, or of his Providence, as I am ſure there is infinite reaſon to the contrary; yet the belief of theſe things is ſo much for the intereſt, and comfort, and happineſs of Mankind, that a wiſe man would be heartily troubled to part with a Principle ſo favourable to his quiet, and that does ſo exactly anſwer all the natural deſires and hopes and fears of men, and is ſo equally calculated both for our comfort in this World, and for our happineſs in the other. For when a man's thoughts have ranged and wandered as far as they can, his mind can find no reſt, no probable foundation of happineſs but God onely; no other reaſonable, no nor tolerable *Hypotheſis* and *Scheme* of things for a wiſe man

man to rely upon, and to live and die by. For no other Principle but this, firmely believed, and truly lived up to by an answerable practise, was ever able to support the generality of Mankind, and to minister true consolation to them under the calamities of life, and the pangs of death.

And if there were not something real in the Principles of Religion, it is impossible that they should have so remarkeable and so regular an effect to support our minds in every condition, upon so great a number of persons of different degrees of understanding, of all ranks and conditions, young and old, learned and unlearned, in so many distant Places, and in all Ages of the World the Records whereof are come down to us: I say so real, and so frequent, and so regular an effect as this is, cannot with any colour of reason be ascribed either to blind Chance, or meer Imagination, but must have a real, and regular, and uniform cause proportionable to so great and general an effect.

I remember that *Grotius*, in his excellent *Book of the Truth of the Christian Religion*, hath this observation, That God did not intend that the Principles of Religion should have the utmost evidence that any thing is capable of, and such as is sufficient to answer and bear down all sorts of captious Cavils and Objections against it;

but so much as is abundantly sufficient to satisfie a sober and impartial Enquirer after Truth, one that hath no other interest but to find out Truth, and when he hath found it to yield to it: If it were otherwise, and the Principles of Religion were as glaring and evident as the Sun shining at Noon-day, as there could hardly be any vertue in such a Faith, so Infidelity would be next to an impossibility.

All that I would expect from any man, that shall say that he cannot see sufficient reason to believe the *Being* and the *Providence* of God, is this; that he would offer some other *Principles*, that he would advance any other *Hypothesis* and *Scheme* of things that is more agreeable to the common and natural Notions of men, and to all Appearances of things in the World; and that does bid more fairly for the comfort and happiness of Mankind, than these Principles of the *Being* of a God, and of his watchfull *Providence* over the children of men, do plainly do: And till this be clearly done, the Principles of Religion which have generally been received by Mankind, and have obtain'd in the World in all Ages, cannot fairly be discarded, and ought not to be disturbed and put out of Possession. And this, I think, puts this whole matter upon a very fair and reasonable Issue, and that nothing more needs to be said concerning it.

Secondly,

Secondly, from what hath been ſaid, in the fore- 2.
going Diſcourſe, it naturally follows, That God is the only Object of our truſt and confidence, and therefore to him alone, and to no other, we ought to addreſs all our Prayers and Supplications *for mercy and grace to help in time of need.* But now, according to the Doctrine and Practiſe of the Church of *Rome*, the *Pſalmiſt* here puts a very odd and ſtrange Queſtion, *Whom have I in Heaven but thee?* To which they give a quite different anſwer from what the *Pſalmiſt* plainly intended, namely, that God was the ſole Object of his hope and truſt, and that upon Him alone he relyed as his onely comfort and happineſs: But to this Aſſertion of the *Pſalmiſt* the Church of *Rome* can by no means agree: They underſtand this matter much better than the *Pſalmiſt* did, namely, that beſides God there are in Heaven innumerable *Angels* and *Saints*, in whom we are to repoſe great truſt and confidence, and to whom alſo we are to addreſs ſolemn Prayers and Supplications, not only for temporal good things, but for the pardon of our ſins, for the increaſe of our Graces, and for eternal Life: That there are in Heaven particular *Advocates* and *Patrons* for all exigencies and occaſions, againſt all ſorts of dangers and diſeaſes, for all Graces and Vertues, and in a word for all temporal, ſpiritual, and eternal Bleſſings; to whom we may apply our ſelves, without

troubling God and our Blessed Saviour, who also is *God blessed for evermore*, by presuming upon every occasion to make their immediate Addresses to Him: For as they would make us believe, though *Abraham* was ignorant of it and *David* knew it not, the blessed Spirits above, both Angels and Saints, do not onely intercede with God for us for all sorts of Blessings, but we may make direct and immediate Addresses to them to bestow these Blessings upon us: For so they do in the Church of *Rome*, as is evident, beyond all denyal, from several of their *Prayers* in their most publick and authentick *Liturgies*.

They would indeed fain palliate this matter by telling us, that by these direct & immediate Addresses to Angels and Saints to bestow Grace and eternal Life upon them, they mean no more but only to pray to them that they would be pleased to intercede with God for these Blessings to be bestowed upon them by their Mediation. But if they meane no more, why do they say more then they meane? Why do they use such expressions as to the common sense and understanding of Mankind do signify a great deal more than they say they mean; such expressions, as they themselves do acknowledge, if they be understood according to the most obvious sense of the words, would render them guilty of flat Idolatry? Especially when they know,

that

that they are charged with Idolatry upon this accoont; and since to cleare themselves of it they will not alter their Prayers, they justly lye under the suspition of it.

And yet admitting what they say in this matter to be true, and that by these expressions in their *Prayers* they intend no more but the solemn Invocation of Angels and Saints that they would intercede with God to bestow these Blessings upon them for the sake of their Merits, and upon their Mediation: yet this surely is a great deal too much, and cannot be done without a high entrenchment upon the *Office* of the onely *Mediatour between God and man, the Man Christ Jesus*: But let them not deceive themselves, *God is not mocked*: *The Lord our God is a jealous God*, and *He will not give his Glory to another*.

I have not yet instanced in the grosseſt part of their *Superstition*, not to say downright Idolatry, in this kind; I mean, in their extravagant worship of *the blessed Virgin* and *Mother of our Lord*; whom they blasphemously call the *Queen of Heaven*; and whom by a new style, unknown to the *Scriptures* and *Primitive Antiquity*, they think to dignify with the *modish* Title of *our Lady*; as if that could be any addition of honour to *Her*, whom the *Angel* declared to be *blessed among Women*: Who, if she know any thing of the folies

lies of Her Worſhippers here below, with what diſdain and indignation, do we think She heares thoſe infinite *Prayers* that are made to Her, and that *Sacrilegious* Worſhip which is given Her in that Church, and which makes both pages of their Religion; and which for the frequency of it, both in their publick and private Devotions, is very much beyond what they give to God and Chriſt? As if there were *none in Heaven but She*, nor *any thing upon Earth* to be worſhipped in compariſon of *Her Image*.

Nay ſo far have they carryed this extravagant Folly, and how much farther they would have carryed it, had not the *Reformation* given a check to it, God only knows: ſo far, I ſay, have they proceeded in this Folly, as in that famous *Book* of their *Devotions* called *our Ladyes Pſalter*, not only to apply to Her ſome part of this *Pſalm* out of which I have taken my *Text*, beginning it thus, *How good is God to* Iſrael, *to them that worſhip his B. Mother?* But they have likewiſe profanely *burleſqued*, I cannot afford it a better terme, this whole *Book* of *Pſalms*, applying to *Her* almoſt the higheſt things that are there ſaid concerning *God* and our *Bleſſed Saviour. Heare, O Heavens, and give eare O Earth, and be ye horribly aſtoniſhed*, to ſee the beſt and wiſeſt Religion in the World transform'd into Superſtition and Folly; and to ſee the moſt learned

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Persons in that Communion set themselves in good earnest to justify all these follyes and absurdities by a grave and groundless pretence to *Infallibility*.

Thirdly and *Lastly*, This shews us how necessary the favour of God is to every mans happiness: And there is but one way to gain his friendship and favour, by becoming holy and good as He is: Then may we rejoice and glory in God, as the *Psalmist* here does, and say; *Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee.* A wicked man dreads God above all things in the World, and he has great reason to do so: *For he is not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness, neither shall evil dwell with him: The foolish shall not stand in his sight, he hateth all the workers of iniquity.* When by sin we depart from God, we forsake our own happiness: *Salvation is far from the wicked*, says *David*. And againe, a little after the *Text*, *They that are far from thee shall perish, but it is good for me to draw neat to God*: Now by holyness and goodness we draw neat to *Him*, who alone can make us happy. 3. Psal. 119.

It is certainly the common interest of mankind there should be a God, because we cannot possibly be happy without Him: But then it is no mans interest to be wicked, because thereby we make *Him* our Enemy *in whose favour is life*, and upon

upon whom all our hopes of happiness do depend.

To conclude, If we would have God for our Happiness, we must be sure to make him our Friend, and then we may promise to our selves all those advantages which the Friendship of so great and powerful a Patron can give us. And there is but one way to establish a firm Friendship between God and us, and that is, by doing his Will, and living in obedience to his Laws: *Ye are my friends, (said our Blessed Lord) if ye do whatsoever I command you. This is the love of God, (saith St. John) that we keep his commandments.* And to love God is the way to be made partakers of those glorious things which God *hath prepared for them that love him; things which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man*: Which God of his infinite goodness grant we may all at last be made partakers of, for his mercies sake in *Jesus Christ*: To whom with Thee O Father, and the *Holy Ghost*, be all honour and glory, dominion and power, both now and for ever. *Amen.*

FINIS.